

ARTGAZE

townsville's arts magazine

spring 2009



Now including: performance / theatre



note from the editor

This issue incorporates international, national and local events with a group of local artists having recently returned from the Venice Biennale, just in time for the Fourth National Public Galleries Summit being held in Townsville and the *Strand Ephemera*.

I mentioned in the previous issue that *Art Gaze* is expanding its focus, and performance/theatre is the first new feature. This issue includes upcoming events from Tropic Sun Theatre, and *Art Gaze* will be reviewing these shows in the next issue as part of making performance/theatre a regular feature.

The expansion of *Art Gaze*, however, is just beginning. Keep a lookout for new features in future issues. Thank you to all those involved in making *Art Gaze* possible.

Lastly, I would like to mention my up-coming exhibition. Please come along to my opening. See opposite page for details.

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Front cover: Tegan Ollett
B'INDING, 2009,
Performance with chair, vinyl mat, television, DVD
player, four lights, extension leads and rope,
Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

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Thurs 17th September 6pm eMerge Media Space

To be officially opened by Mitch Goodwin, coordinator of BNMA
School of Creative Arts, James Cook University, Townsville

Exhibition from 14th - 18th September



School of
Creative Arts
Townsville Campus



This exhibition fulfills a component of the Bachelor of
Visual Art Honours degree

eMerge Media Space
4781 3142



(Poland) Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Visitors*, 2008/09, Video projection, Courtesy of the Profile Foundation

Fare Mondi: making words - a traveller's insight

BY ERIC NASH

In July, a group of 25 Townsville- and Brisbane-based arts enthusiasts made the long journey to the Venice Biennale. As a first-time Biennale visitor, the bombardment of high-quality exhibitions on every corner of the island was simultaneously refreshing and daunting. It was refreshing to see so many high-calibre exhibitions in the one place, as well as the volumes of people who travelled from all corners of the globe specifically for the Biennale, underlining the relevance of the arts. I was overwhelmed, though, by the impossible amount of art, especially if a real effort is made to absorb the meanings, stories, studies and rationales that have underpinned each and every artwork.

And so it became increasingly evident that while we can appreciate that an artist may be influential – his or her work important in the context of contemporary art – artwork can only be judged by the individual, not the masses. If no personal connection to a work is felt, be it aesthetic, intellectual or emotional, then a connection cannot and should not be forced, regardless of the importance being placed on the work by others. For lack of a better reasoning, there simply isn't time. I personally experienced this when viewing several pavilions,

and asked myself the unavoidable question: 'What am I not getting?'. But, instead of getting hung up on what didn't appeal to me, it was far more beneficial to accept that this will happen from time to time and to focus my attention on immersing myself in artwork that did appeal. So, below is a list of my top Venice Biennale experiences.

Lygia Pape

Lygia Pape's sculpture *Ttéia I, C* has the appearance of being made purely from beams of light. This, in itself, is a striking thing to walk into, like stepping into an abandoned church with holes punched in the roof, the viewer is transported into a dark, dingy, yet strangely magical place. Pape, who passed away in 2004, created *Ttéia I, C* by arranging gold thread into square-shaped beams, leading from the ceiling diagonally to the floor. Based on experiments she conducted in the 1970s, the beams are carefully lit from the ceiling and, combined with the dark setting, achieve the effect of appearing to have no point of origin – they simply materialise.

Pape's *Ttéia* series was the 'most ambitious research into three-dimensionality' conducted by the artist in a career that had already seen her found Neo-Concretism with fellow artists Hélio Oiticica (1937–80) and Lygia Clark (1920–88). The movement sought to investigate the interactive relationship that can be formed between art and its audience, while Pape's own work often explored themes such as the invention of time and light.



(Japan) Miwi Yanagi, *Series of fairy tale: untitled III*, 2005, Gelatin silver print, 140 x 100 cm, Courtesy of the artist

Tomas Saraceno

In commenting on *Fare Mondi: Making Worlds*, Director Daniel Birnbaum stated: 'A work of art is more than an object, more than a commodity. It embodies a vision of the world, and if taken seriously must be seen as a way of making a world'. Saraceno achieves both these objectives with his giant installation *Galaxy Forming along Filaments, like Droplets along the Strands of a Spider's Web*.

The work broadens the scope of Saraceno's investigation into what constitutes an architectural structure, having previously envisioned airborne housing as a possible solution to both population growth and climate change. In this instance, the artist 'likenes [the spider's] web constructions to the structure of our universe's very earliest history, when galaxies were arranged in sponge-like formations along filaments; groups of stars and other matter were strung along axes like shining beads of water'. Or, in Saraceno's own words, 'like droplets on a spider's web'. More than just a vision of the world, and much like Pape's work, Saraceno has been successful in creating a world – a space in which viewers can lose themselves to marvel at the intricacy of, not only the installation, but the intricate nature of all creation.

Japan – *Windswept Women*

Miwa Yanagi represents Japan with distinction in producing her exhibition *Windswept Women*. Her striking, large-scale photographs confront the viewer – the giant women presented in the stunning black

and white photographs are both young and old at the same time. These women are the embodiment of both life and death simultaneously, as Yanagi enforces her acceptance of ageing, life and death as a fluid process. Commissioner Hiroshi Minamishima observes that 'It is the mobility and fluidity of unending death that Yanagi seems to discover in the momentum of life ... the old girls appear like visitors from another world [and] completely cover our small lives as observers ... The death within these women, who are meant to be small, is a transposed world that emerges when one recalls their actual size.'

Yanagi's *Windswept Women* is as alien to us as it is visually arresting. While there is recognition that these women, despite their enormity, are human, and that the artist's concept of life and death is quite accurate, there is still an eerie other-worldliness to these works – though perhaps I and, I suspect, a few other viewers are simply not yet ready to stare death in the face.

Poland – *Ospiti/Guests/Goście*

The Polish pavilion presented *Ospiti/Guests/Goście*, a multi-panel video projection by Krzysztof Wodiczko. The projection is of numerous large arch windows, dirty and fuzzy, and a similarly hazy skylight. Blurry figures can be made out through all of the windows – workers appearing, stepping forward, cleaning and then receding again. They are constantly distorted not only by the blurry windows, but also by the window-washing liquid. The figures depict Polish and Eastern European immigrants, and work at different levels: some on ladders, some sitting atop the roof, others at ground level.

It is curious, then, that the viewer, who is also a Venice 'visitor', is allowed to feel more at home inside the building than the immigrants. They appear to the viewer as 'the other'; within sight, within reach, yet somehow unknown, and always on the other side. It is a political game Wodiczko plays, letting us peer into the uneasy world of the immigrant, a message driven home by a number of sound recordings that accompany the piece. One particularly harrowing tale describes the abduction and deportation of a man in front of his family. The viewer is left uneasy by this glimpse into the world occupied by immigrants, one in which they are not 'at home' and remain 'eternal guests'.

Russia – *Victory over the Future*

The Russian pavilion is explained by curator Olga Sviblova as each artist 'refer[ing] to personal artistic experience and Russian avant-garde traditions deeply rooted in contemporary Russian art for their problematisation and metaphorisation of the theme "victory of the future", creating their own artistic cosmos'.

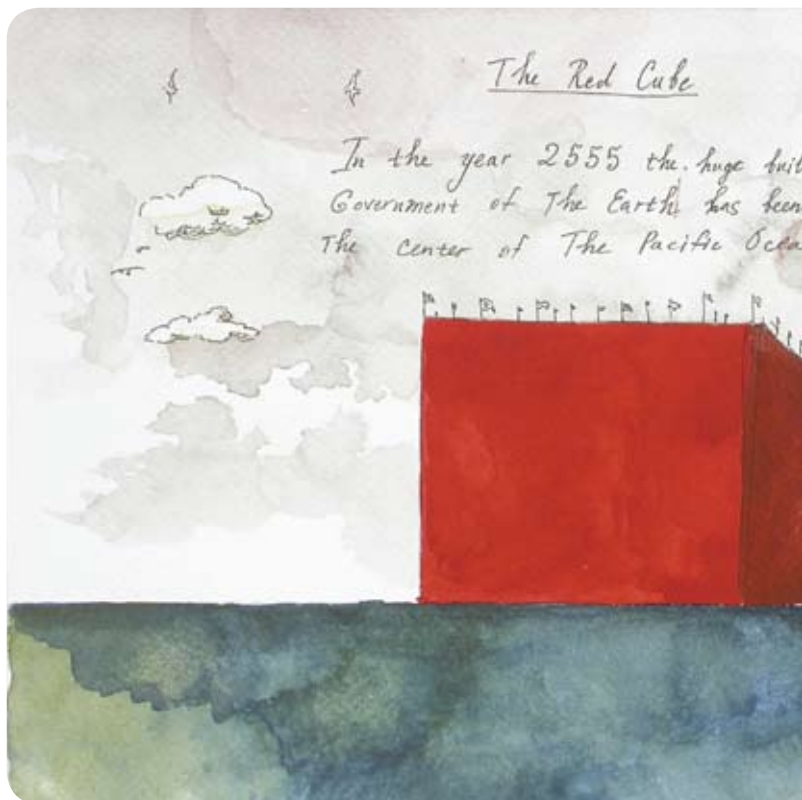
It is no surprise after discovering this that Russia should present an exhibition as disjointed as it is interesting. However, for the most part, the works are quite appealing. One particularly engaging work is a mixed media installation by Alexey Kallima. Through a long, narrow hallway, a large crowd can be seen. Viewers are enticed to walk down the hallway towards the crowd, which can now be seen to be standing, applauding and cheering. Indeed, the cheering can be heard, and increases in volume, encouraging viewers down the tunnel into the 'field'. With the cheering now quite deafening, the viewer turns to see the crowd cheering from all four directions, which allows the mind to slip and escape to this wonderful place – how it must feel to be adored by an entire nation. Kallima allows viewers' minds to wander, their senses to take in this experience – for just long enough before the crowd vanishes and the cheering stops – and they are then transported hastily back to an empty white cube, feeling quite sheepish. It is a rude awakening, but to escape to this world for just a moment is quite a powerful experience.

Pavel Pepperstein's drawings are another highlight from *Victory over the Future*, building on the interest aroused from seeing his work represented in the Giardini main pavilion. The drawings are Pepperstein's 'visions of the future', absurd and amusing worlds which seem so foreign, but with too close a resemblance to Earth to be anywhere else. Sviblova declares it a 'series of works in which uncompromising Suprematist elements sprout through the nebulous contours of future megalopolises'. However, it is undoubtedly his personification and evolution of all things natural – from mountains to clouds to trees – that are most amusing.

Spain – Miquel Barceló

Admittedly, this exhibition seemed like a guilty pleasure for those in need of some painting – and good painting at that. It is impossible not to feel a little overburdened by the abundance of video and new media art at the Venice Biennale, and the luscious, worked surfaces of Miquel Barceló were the perfect detox.

Dating from 2001 to 2008, the 18 large paintings explored three seemingly unconnected themes; however, this does not detract from the quality of the works presented. The first series depicts solitary gorillas, which relate to his work from the late 1990s about an albino gorilla captured by Spanish scientists which lived out its remaining days in captivity. The second series presents new African landscapes, though it is the third group of works, which Commissioner Enrique Juncosa describes as 'white paintings that represent the foam of the



(Russia) Pavel Pepperstein, *Landscapes of the future 2555*, 2006, Watercolour, ink on paper, 17.5 x 25 cm, Collection: SFA, Courtesy of Galerie Kamm, Berlin

waves in an almost abstract manner', that demand respect. These works link to Barceló's early investigation into the behaviour of pigment and material. As a result, he is seemingly able to command the paint to behave in any way he wishes, and create any kind of surface, with some of the mixed media works so three-dimensional and fragile in appearance that they could be deemed a flat sculpture.

Great Britain – Steve McQueen

Though my feelings towards video works at the Biennale may already be evident, it is by no means that I consider it a lesser art form – far from it. Some video works were among the most moving works in Venice. But it is quite easy to feel jaded by the concentration of video works, and this can be put down to one major issue – the way in which a video should be viewed.

Most often when walking into a video space, you do not conveniently walk in to the beginning of the film, which is frustrating in itself. You are completely unaware of how long the film goes for, and whether you should sit through the entire film or come back and see how it began. After all, you don't want to walk away from an artwork prematurely; there could be something at the beginning that ties the whole thing together. But, the entire time the video is playing it is hard not to feel anxious that you may be over-committing your time – sometimes over an hour on one work – when you don't feel particularly strongly about it. All the while your chances of seeing other works that would appeal to you are becoming more limited.

And so that brings us to Great Britain's Venice representative, Steve McQueen. Entry to see McQueen's film was in accordance with a session time listing posted at the front of the building, and it was clear that this film ran for half an hour. So, the choice was yours – you knew how much time you would have to commit (though many still chose to leave early), and you knew you would be seeing the film beginning to end, as it was intended. This, combined with a staggered seating, ensuring no-one would bob up and down in front of you, allowed the viewer to feel comfortable with the commitment they had made to view the film, and therefore appreciate the artwork fully. While 'strict



Lygia Pape, *TTEIA 1, C*, (2002) 2005, Gold thread in square forms, Project Lygia Pape - Cultural Association, Photo: Paula Pape

session times' smacked of arrogance at first glance, it became clear that this method of viewing was simply adopted to do the work, and the viewer, justice.

The 30-minute, split screen film shows everyday scenes of the Venice Giardini – the gardens that play home to the 30 permanent pavilions used during the Biennale – well before the Biennale 'circus' rolls into town. Using the garden setting was an idea McQueen conceived when visiting the 2007 exhibition, and every shot in the resulting film is fully considered, if a little indulgent. Packs of wild dogs walk the gardens, ominous, shadowy figures that tie each shot together. In *Giardini 2009*, McQueen has not so much 'created a world', as given visitors an insight into a world that is created with each incarnation of the Biennale – a world far from the reality of the cold, dimly lit, graffiti and litter-riddled gardens McQueen presents.

While I've presented my personal highlights from *Making Worlds: Fare Mondi*, I stand by my assertion that these opinions are not prescriptive. Like any art opinion, whether it is the opinion of the learned critic, the masses or of one person alone, it is to be considered, and considered only. 'Knowledge' of the merits of an artwork can only be gained through personal experience and a connection with the work. And it is only when we feel this strong connection to a work that we can truly discover the world the artist has created for us. ❖

Birnbaum, D. & Volz, J. (2009) *Making Worlds* Exhibition, Verona: Grafiche SIZ s.p.a., Campagnola di Zevio.

Birnbaum, D. & Volz, J. (2009) *Making Worlds* Participating Countries Collateral Events, Verona: Grafiche SIZ s.p.a., Campagnola di Zevio.

**17 October -
29 November**

Escape into *Experimenta Playground*, an exhibition of artworks that beg to be touched and invite your interaction. Experience a digital media playground of interactive artworks, video installations and short films on screen by Australian and international artists. *Experimenta Playground* is a free exhibition that promises an unforgettable experience. Experience for yourself contemporary art that made over 44,000 people in Melbourne smile.

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JCU students do Venice

The Australian Pavillon

BY STEPHEN NAYLOR



Vernon Ah Kee, *Cant chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2009, Installation, Photo: Stephen Naylor

The Australian Pavilion is a chameleon; it has morphed again into a new space revealing the most current offerings of Australian contemporary visual art. Such was the experience encountered by a group of James Cook University (JCU) students on their recent tour to Europe to absorb the current trends and traditions in visual art and new media. The focus of the tour was to study both contemporary and traditional art forms and to recognise the importance of space in the presentation of artworks, especially with the changing trends in art practice where the screen and new media are so pervasive.

Space is central in the portrayal of contemporary art as it establishes the *mise-en-scène* required for the theatre, or the spectacle used to gain impact in the world of art. The usual gleam of the white, Phillip Cox designed Australian Pavilion with curved ceiling and naturally lit glazed interiors was transformed into a grunge theme park with an apocalyptic tableaux.

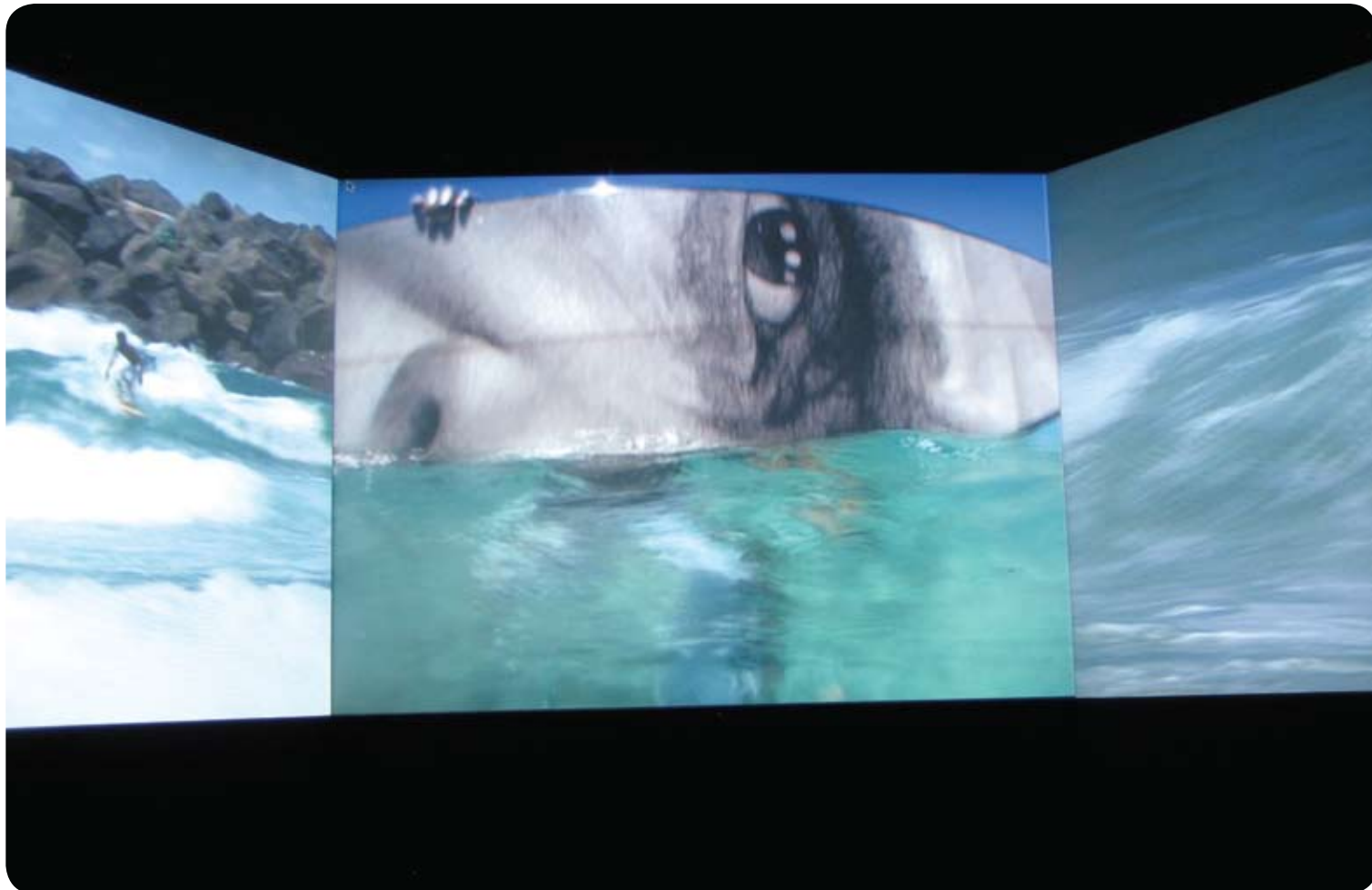
MADDESTMAXIMVS is an allegory of the Australian interior. The 'road warrior with roo', cast amidst a vast red horizontal landscape, sought to capture the attention of the international audience. The visual props of the V8 'Interceptor' and black leathers, reborn from the original *Mad Max* films, were back to renew the cinematic aura of the Australian dreaming.

Sean Gladwell was an appropriate choice for Venice in 2009, coming off his acclaim in 2007 with his enigmatic *Storm Sequence*, but the characteristic charm of slow motion footage generated from an urbane youthful generation was not as evident in this new evocation. The poetic scene of the 'Mad Max' look-a-like cradling a fresh kangaroo carcass retrieved from the side of the road failed to establish the mesmerising effect as seen in previous works. Even the heroic gesture of Max standing on the roof of the Interceptor, heading

into the vast Australian landscape, failed to move us in the way that earlier break dancers, BMX bikers and skateboarders were able to by marrying physical skills with new digital screen technology. The whole Pavilion seemed to suggest a new direction for Sean Gladwell – an artist capable of creating elaborate tableaux as opposed to the innovative artist of the slow moving image.

The cutting edge missing in Gladwell's work was compensated for by the other Australian representation in the Ludoteca. The curated show *Once Removed*, by Felicity Fenner, with works by Vernon Ah Kee, Ken Yonetani and a collaborative piece by Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, set to address issues of displacement. Yonetani, who undertook research at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (in Townsville), has made a profound statement on the ecological destruction of the Great Barrier Reef – his sugar installation resembling a raked Japanese garden with bleached coral formations set a poetic tone for the exhibition. The aquatic continuity was advanced through Vernon Ah Kee's surfboard narrative *Cant Chant*, which explores post-colonial displacement and engagement with urban colonisation of a surf beach by three Indigenous men. Healy and Cordeiro's solid tower of 195,774 VHS tapes in their work *Life Span* signified the viewing time equivalence of 66.1 years. The monumental nature of the installation made one reflect on the experiences one encounters over an average lifetime.

These challenging works confronted JCU students as the Australian context was familiar but the works were out of place in a European setting. The artworks were new and required the audience to work with limited information to derive meaning from the material presented – a key strategy in much contemporary art. Through critical analysis and drawing upon conventions of art history, students were able to make meaning from these artworks – to draw on their own



Vernon Ah Kee, Cant chant (Wegrewhere), 2009, Video DV, 3 screens, 7 min, Photo: Stephen Naylor

experiences as art students working with technology and having some knowledge of issues facing artists working in Australia. Part of the art tour was designed to push students out of their comfort zone and to embrace contemporary art from the position of an international audience.

Students were also exposed to traditional artworks in major museums in Italy and Spain, including the Vatican, Uffizi, Prado, Renia Sofia, Guggenheim (Bilbao) and the Thyssen-Bornemisza. These experiences created a counterpoint to the contemporary art shown in the Venice Biennale. Through engagement with a range of art practices and museological conventions, JCU students now have a broader comprehension of the international art world, which they can bring to their studies in the School of Creative Arts at JCU. ❖

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Krysten Harvey, *Little man*, 2009, Digital photography, Courtesy of Pinnacles Gallery



Tim Nardoo, *Hear, see, speak no evil*, 2009, Digital photography, Courtesy of Pinnacles Gallery

2009 NAIDOC celebrations

BY JACQUI STOCK

On and around the month of July, Townsville's galleries have abounded with all things Aboriginal and Islander in celebration of the traditions, customs and achievements of the Indigenous people of Australia.

Initially held the week before Australia Day, The National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) was formed in a positive response following its predecessor, The Day of Mourning, also known as Aborigines Day, which represented the Indigenous peoples of Australia's feelings in regard to the celebration of European settlement.

NAIDOC celebrations shifted to July in 1955 and expanded their coverage in the 1970s to encompass a whole week from the first Sunday to the second Sunday in July, with the arts community holding exhibitions throughout the latter part of June to the beginning of August in response and support.

This year's theme is *Honouring Our Elders, Nurturing Our Youth* and Townsville's galleries have presented numerous exhibitions to complement this.

Umbrella Studio hosted *On the Edge: Visions of a Tropical Coastline* until 12 July, which generated much interest, including

a visit from the students of Abergowrie College near Ingham, who travelled to Townsville to see the show, as it held deep significance for many whose relatives were among the artists represented.

The show highlighted the works of 12 artists with connections to the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE in Cairns, including four of non-Indigenous origin, further incorporating the spirit of reconciliation into its theme of passing information from one generation to the next.

Several well-known artists from the Torres Straits, Alick Tipoti, Dennis Nona and Joey Laifoo to name a few, and artists such as Rosella Namok, Arone Meeks and Elaine Lampton from mainland Queensland, banded together to present their thoughts on our tropical coast. All have strong traditional links with their homelands and draw their inspiration from these, their culture and the physical beauty of their surroundings.

Initially trained in the art of woodcarving, Torres Strait Islander Dennis Nona from Badu Island has extended his skills into the arenas of printmaking and sculpture, through which he successfully translates the traditional teachings and beliefs of his people. Images such as his etching of *Wati Kisai – Bad Moon*, which tells the story of bad spirits present at the full moon that damage the eyesight of children, shows

children shielding their eyes from the moon's harmful rays and is typical of his unique style.

Joey Laifoo's intricate hand-coloured linocut, *Life (Baby Turtle in Shell)*, shows the interconnectedness of life in the Torres Straits, as does *Solar Thonar (Turtle Mating Season)*, which contains myriad elements concerned with the hunting of these beautiful creatures, such as the threat of tiger sharks and the equipment required.

Alick Tipoti sees his art as a way to realise his responsibility to document the 'stories, genealogies, songs and other aspects of his culture', ensuring the passing on of knowledge to future generations. Tipoti's linocut *Maiwan Arika* talks about a man collecting *malwa* (clam shell meat) off the reef using an *upi* (bamboo knife) and the necessity of placing the sharp shells face down to prevent future gatherers from being cut by the opened shells' sharp edges.

Artists Brian Robinson and Ceferino Sabatino, both from Waiben (Thursday Island), share the stories and skills passed down by their elders. Sabatino's *Dhoeri* (Torres Strait headdress) was modelled on a style given to his mother's family, which will be passed on to future generations, while Robinson's contemporary sculptural piece *Githalai (mud crab, Scylla serrata)*, celebrates 'crabbing day', an experience shared with his grandfather. Unfortunately, as the exhibition's works are for sale as the works travel, these pieces were not in the Townsville show and can only be seen in the catalogue accompanying it.

Internationally renowned Indigenous artist Arone Meeks, whose tribal origins are from the Laura area of far north Queensland, created the *La Nina* series for inclusion in this exhibition. His vibrant contemporary works *Cyclone II Country*, *Cyclone Reef* and *Wet Season Torrents* talk about the fragile nature of our ever-changing coastline as it is transformed by the wet season each year. It is the process of nature that is highlighted in these works, which stand alone as well as combine in a triptych of seasonal significance.

Lockhart River artist, Rosella Namok's acrylic images *After the Lowtide ... Marks on the Sand* and *Southeast Time ... Big Waves* show the marks left by the tide and the intensity of the seasonal effects on the sea at various times of the year. The artist's choice to use high-gloss paint gives the works a connection with the water through its reflective surface. Namok learnt to paint from her father, painting traditional markings on young men for ceremonial dances using traditional ochres and white clay but now mixes her own palette from primary colours using black and white tones for emphasis. She paints, in her own words, 'traditional times and today times', translating her experience of place and teaching her culture and traditions through her works.

Elaine Lampton, born in Townsville of both Aboriginal (Birragubba, Bunjlung) and South Sea Islander (Tana Island) ancestry, brings her life experiences to the viewer through her works. She uses the analogy of travelling from place to place, gathering information in the search which all people have for truth, in her work *From Waterhole to Waterhole*.

Zane Saunders from Cairns, whose ancestral associations are the Butchulla (Bajala) of Fraser Island, talks about the 'on the edge' challenges faced in life and their resolution in his work *I Am Fulfilled Just Knowing*.

The three artists not of Aboriginal or Islander heritage in this exhibition – Anne Eglitis, Ian Horn and Sasi Victoire – each share with their fellow exhibitors a love of the tropical coast and a passion

for teaching, their works combining with the others to highlight the amazing talents present in our multicultural society.

Also focusing on the wealth of talent found in Indigenous communities and on the 2009 NAIDOC theme, Pinnacles Gallery brought the viewer a sample of the way of the future in Aboriginal art through its exhibition *Depth of Field*.

Indigenous artists Rachel Tipoti and May Kabay created an opportunity for eight young artists from Palm Island, the Torres Straits and Townsville to produce an exhibition of digital photography highlighting their personal vision through non-traditional methods. The participants were given a dominant theme of the importance of family but expanded this to include their wish to be accepted for themselves and not as someone who is different or exotic. The photographs create a digital essay of the lives of these young people, showing their connections with their elders, each other and non-Indigenous members of their community.

Harry Rueben's work *Bikies* is metaphorical in content. The addition of the comment 'Life's like a wheel, the faster it spins the more it is blurred' to his title, emphasises the difficulties experienced by young people in today's world. Another piece, *Disco Fever*, echoes his comment 'If only life could be so colourful', a wish shared by many young people regardless of their race or colour.

This is continued in Eunice Webster's piece *Hanging Out*, which looks at the similarities between all young people wherever they live, as does Krysten Harvey's insightful work *Friendship*, which presents two boys from different cultures sharing the simple pleasure of an ice-cream after school.

Thursday Islander Melinee Jackway's work *Learning* and Palm Island artist Tania Haines's image *Dad and Son Building* are concerned with the traditional ways of passing of knowledge from one generation to the next, while Monique Satrick's *Swamp 1 and 2* and Tania Haines's *Boys on the Beach* look at the quality of life available in the Palm Island environment.

Tim Nardoo's work *Hear, Speak, See no Evil* talks about respect for self and others, while *Lil Boxer*, also by Nardoo, looks at the place sport has in bringing hope of a future to young people in the community.

Kathleen Namok looks at the possibilities of love between different people of different backgrounds.

The exhibition is supported by animated films produced by Big Eye: Aboriginal Animations, and features a series of films curated by Australian and Canadian Indigenous artists Jenny Fraser and Lubi Thomas. The animations aim at dealing with the problems of contemporary life and perpetuating the teachings of the past by using a format designed to connect with today's visual-centric youth, such as Canadian artist Colin Curwen's *Baby Blues* from the *Raven Tales* series, which teaches about the need to sacrifice for the good of all, and Australian artist Frank McLeod's *Tuggan Tuggan*, from the *Dreaming* series, which teaches about the consequences of following your own ideas against those of the teachings of others older and wiser than yourself.

The exhibition was enjoyed until 2 August 2009 at the Riverway Complex in Thuringowa Central. NAIDOC exhibitions hold a special place in terms of understanding between the various cultural groups sharing our region, helping to bridge the gaps caused by the misunderstandings of the past. ❖

Dancenorth: broadening its artistic reach

BY BERNADETTE ASHLEY

Dancenorth's general manager Joanne Fisher uses the word 'dovetail' to aptly describe many of the collaborations and timely confluences that have arisen for the company and its venue this year.

An upcoming art auction will see visual artists supporting a fundraising event to extend Dancenorth's community and schools programs. Significant regional artists, including Anneke Silver, Gail Mabo and Peter Lawson, together with emerging talent, will provide works to be auctioned on 18 September, as well as 'experiences', such as dinner with the Mayor up for sale to the highest bidder.

Fisher is delighted by the synergy of artists supporting dance in supporting education and cultural outreach. The auction is the tip of the iceberg, part of a series of events and strategies under the company's *Art for Art Sake* banner, which has seen Dancenorth throw open the doors of the historic School of the Arts building to welcome the community back inside.

'The connection can be lost when Dancenorth is busy with works in development or away touring. Former artistic director Gavin Webber's ambition to further the company's reputation for excellence nationally and overseas has been realised. The company needed to re-establish a bond with the community, develop the venue as a cultural hub.'

When new artistic director Raewin Hill arrives to take up her post on 1 January 2010, '... she is keen to extend what is already happening', says Fisher.

Company brainstorming sessions late last year identified a number of ways to begin to find a fresh audience and increase community participation. Just as Dancenorth was about to launch DNA – to bring arts projects in to fill the venue's blank walls – one of Fisher's instances of 'dovetailing' intentions occurred. Shane Keen approached Dancenorth looking for an alternative home for the artist-run initiative *A Little White Space*, which had to leave its former tiny gallery at The Brewery due to renovations. The result is *Artspaced*, the collective's new, bigger incarnation, occupying several spaces within the School of the Arts building, and providing an enlivening backdrop of exhibitions, openings and live music events. *DNA* was dissolved as the project's agenda was fulfilled at the outset by the collaboration with *Artspaced*.

Film was next in Dancenorth's commitment to work across art forms. Fisher saw an advertisement in *RealTime* magazine for a national short film festival wanting to share the experience with regional centres, and invited *Flickerfest* to Townsville. The weekend of screenings earlier this year was a sell-out event, and people had to be turned away. 'An amazing success for a first time event', smiles Fisher.

Another two separate film events are planned for September on the strength of that response: *Message Sticks Indigenous Film Festival*; and *ReelDance* – short films that cross the creative boundaries between dance, art and new media.

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A proposal from the general manager of the Mornington Island dancers to bring the troupe to perform and to exhibit traditional art at Dancenorth, led to Fisher approaching *Message Sticks* with a view to creating a larger event involving other genres. The only weekend the film festival could possibly schedule to visit Townsville coincided perfectly with the Islanders' 12 September visit, and *Message Sticks* also offered to bring a curator and Indigenous film-maker for workshops.

Indigenous artist Aicey Zaro will conduct visual art workshops for children, and there will be bush tucker education and tastings in a celebration, which will '... go across the board in sensory stimuli', says Fisher. Perc Tucker Regional Gallery will be hosting an exhibition of Mornington Island contemporary art in its Niche Gallery, in another neat confluence of events.

The *Reeldance* screenings will support the premiere of Dancenorth's own first conceptual dance film, with a cocktail event on Wednesday, 16 September. The company's rehearsal director Michelle Ryan (also a choreographer with an eminent dance career behind her) is the creative force driving the film project. The timing of the premiere acknowledges Disability Week, and Ryan's reality of living with multiple sclerosis. The production has also provided a unique opportunity for four students from James Cook University School of Creative Arts to assist with the film and produce their own 'making of' as part of their course assessment.

The Townsville season of Dancenorth's most recent dance production, *Nowhere Fast*, by guest choreographer and Helpmann Award winner Ross McCormack, had the best audience attendance figures yet achieved. Fisher attributes this to the success of the many reciprocally beneficial relationships, cultural cross-pollination and community-minded initiatives underway.

The company's open dance class program *Sweatshops* allows subscribers to attend an array of almost daily dance workouts, embracing everything from hip hop to Pilates and samba. The boardroom, via an initiative sponsored by the Commonwealth Bank, is now available for hire by corporate groups as an incubator for creative thinking in an inspirational environment.

People entering the School of the Arts building for these purposes are exposed to other Dancenorth programs and surrounded by the ambience of *Artspaced* shows, broadening the audience for both dance and visual art.

That audience will expand even further when Dancenorth takes to the outdoors on 4 October at Heatley Park to fulfil an invitation by Tropical Populations (a QLD government health project) to create 'dance in the park'. Fisher is very excited about the potential for this event after seeing Chunky Move's public dance event, *Moving One Hundred*, in Melbourne's Federation Square in June. Chunky Move trained one hundred volunteers aged 16–50 years to perform a 5-minute choreography alongside its own dancers, and Fisher can see Dancenorth adapting the concept for the cause of community tropical health awareness.

The significant gap between resident artistic director appointments, combined with more touring than local performances for the company, could have seen Dancenorth lose touch with its base this year. Instead, it has seized the opportunity to think laterally, to foster inclusiveness, to create unexpected collaborations and to broaden its artistic boundaries. ♦

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by Mary Anne Butler

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May Langeland, 2009, Photo: Jacqui Stock

Feature artist: May Langeland

BY JACQUI STOCK

The first impression on walking through artist May Langeland's front gate is one of incredible peace, of a place of both sanctuary and expression. Scattered throughout the rainforest-style garden are sculptures carved from Hebel block with a definitive earth mother feel. The sculptures were created in honour of May's mother and daughters, as well as herself and contribute to the atmosphere of contentment that pervades the space.

May Langeland, who describes herself as a 'maker of things' in the creative sense, rather than specifically as an artist, graduated from James Cook University in 1993, setting up Art Studio 26 in an old warehouse building on Palmer Street in South Townsville. She later moved the school to her property in Wulguru, where she has converted the horse stables situated behind her house into a studio equipped with everything necessary to create art, whether it is painting, pottery or even woodturning that her students would like to try.

I asked May about the decade of teaching art which was her passion and enabled her to continue her arts expression as well as provide for her essential living needs for more than a decade.

Jacqui Stock: When did you first become interested in a career in the arts?

May Langeland: I've always been interested in the arts but when I left Uni I was offered an existing art school by someone who was leaving the region and didn't want to desert her young students, I needed to support myself and it was either that or scrubbing floors.

Jacqui: Even though you were taking over an existing concern was there anything you did to further establish yourself?

May: I contacted the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) which provided me with an income while I got established. They also helped me put together a business plan which incorporated a ten year projection, and taught me about market research, amongst other things.

Jacqui: You mentioned earlier that you inherited some young students. Did you only teach children or did you expand the business to accommodate adult classes as well?

May: I started with the children's classes although I did add two or three adult classes, but it was the children's classes that were much more consistent. Adults will walk over hot coals to bring their children to classes but the adults themselves often couldn't make it for a variety of reasons, for example, if one of their children were sick, so it was the children's classes that were my staple.

Jacqui: Did you advertise for clientele and where was this most effective?

May: In the beginning I did advertise in arts establishments and I've always advertised in the *Yellow Pages* but as time went on I didn't need to, word of mouth was always the best advertisement.

Jacqui: Did you always work on your own?

May: Occasionally I would have friends who would do weekend seminars in the studio in a medium I didn't offer but this led back to adult classes again and often you would have 15 people enrolled and then only one or two would turn up.

Jacqui: How did running the school reflect on your private arts practise?

May: I had been involved in publicity for other organisations so I knew that it was necessary to be a first class publicist to market my work, and I thought I'm earning my living teaching the children and I'm keeping my skills up teaching the occasional adult class so why should I wear myself out when I don't need to. You have to be involved in so many arts organisation and others concerns like Rotary, it's a lot of running around.

Jacqui: What variety of subjects did you teach?

May: My major at uni was sculpture and after I left there I bought a couple of pottery wheels and a kiln from my friend Di Cali. I offered printmaking, painting and drawing as well as pottery, although with the children I incorporated everything I could think of, combining art theory with fun things like papermaking and woodwork, mainly concentrating on showing them how to explore.

Jacqui: What would you say is the most valuable thing learning art teaches you?

May: Well I used to say to the parents: it doesn't matter whether your child is going to be a lawyer or a doctor or a plumber, learning art is good because it teaches them to look outside the square and to try more than one avenue to solve any problem.

Jacqui: Sitting here with you I can't help but notice the wonderful murals covering the walls of your house, you've really brought the garden inside. When did you start doing that?

May: When I decided that I wasn't going to market my art and would do it for myself, I've always loved my garden and thought it would be nice to bring it inside.

Jacqui: What are you doing with your time these days?

May: Well, I retired from teaching full time in 2004 although I still teach a small class of adults to keep my hand in. My current project is learning woodturning with the Townsville Area Wood-Turners Association and I already have some ideas on how I would like to express myself artistically with that. I used to be a cabinetmaker before I studied art and I've always loved learning something new.



May Langeland, 2009, Photo: Jacqui Stock

Jacqui: You said earlier that you consider yourself a 'maker of things'. This has certainly been true of your life. Where do you see yourself going from here?

May: I'm going to spend the rest of my life down in the studio enjoying the skills I've learned. I'm not doing it for money anymore, just for the enjoyment. ❖

A promotional flyer for 'The Blue Art Shop'. The top half features a woman with dark hair, wearing a white tank top and a light blue button-down shirt, holding a paintbrush and painting a face. The background is decorated with blue flowers and a dotted line. The text is in various fonts and colors, including blue, white, and black. The bottom section has a blue background with white text and a large circular discount badge.

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Raise your voice:

Fourth National Public Galleries Summit

BY BERNADETTE ASHLEY

Executive Director of Museum and Gallery Services, Rebekah Butler, is looking forward to revisiting Townsville for *Raise Your Voice: Fourth National Public Galleries Summit*, in mid-September. The former Umbrella Studio director explains from her Brisbane office that a number of favourable factors aligned to seal Townsville's selection to host the Summit.

'Townsville was chosen for its ability to service an event of this scale', says Butler, 'and because we wanted to work with a regional gallery for the event, and Perc Tucker has the staff and resources to achieve this. The Summit also coincides with *Strand Ephemera*, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery's major biennial outdoor sculpture event, and the launch of our Q150 touring exhibition *Twelve Degrees of Latitude: Regional Gallery and University Art Collections in Queensland*. Initial discussions with Perc Tucker, Pinnacles Gallery and the Museum of Tropical Queensland began even before local government amalgamations commenced.'

Summit co-ordinator Judy Kean refers to the council amalgamations as well. With regional galleries under the umbrella of local government, and the rationalisation of staff numbers following the mergers, slightly fewer delegates are expected compared with previous conferences. 'And of course in the intervening four years since our last Summit, the global financial crisis has created another constraint. Galleries may send one delegate this time rather than two or three,' Kean notes, 'but we still have more than 120 people coming'.

Kean lists a number of factors which make this Summit a drawcard for gallery and museum professionals. 'Not many events focus on specific themes and developments affecting regional, public and university galleries', asserts Kean, 'or draw delegates from across Australia and New Zealand. We offer high level master classes and sessions with international facilitators, for professionals in their field.'

The keynote speaker is the highly awarded Robyn Archer, accomplished singer, writer, director and artistic director of numerous cultural festivals, who is in demand globally as an articulate and passionate speaker and arts advocate.

Institute directors, academics, lecturers, artists, writers, consultants and advocates from all over Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom will deliver the master classes, plenary sessions and case studies, which constitute the Summit, while a tour of *Strand Ephemera*, the opening of *Twelve Degrees of Latitude*, and the Summit dinner at the Museum of Tropical Queensland will provide social and networking opportunities.

For further information, online registration and speaker profiles, visit: www.magsq.com.au. Registration forms are also available at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery. ♦



Tegan Ollett, *B'INDING*, 2009, Performance with chair, vinyl mat, television, DVD player, four lights, extension leads and rope, Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

Strand Ephemera: the sum of many (p)arts

BY BERNADETTE ASHLEY

The keynote speaker for the Public Art Forum for *Strand Ephemera 5*, Andrea Kleist, claims an appreciation for the notion of *gesamtkunstwerk* – a German expression for complete or total artwork. The idea can also be applied by analogy to any work in which a variety of arts contribute to a shared goal.

Kleist has put her philosophy into action as the Public Art Project Manager for the City of Melbourne, notably in the ongoing Laneways Program, where artists are given open commissions to make temporary artworks in the maze of alleyways linking the city's major thoroughfares. Kleist will speak about the project on Saturday, 5 September, at the *Strand Ephemera* forum at Perc Tucker Regional Gallery (PTRG).

While the tropical ambience of the Strand's sunlit promenade is a world away from Melbourne's often cramped and chilly laneways, Kleist's 'integrated cultural agenda' is applicable to both projects; particularly in the light of the open brief, the temporariness of the works and the artists' responses to place and space.

The team at PTRG imposed a rigorous selection process for this year's biennial outdoor sculpture exhibition and prize, *Strand Ephemera 5*, culling the number of artworks from the all-time high of 49 in 2007, to 22 works this year. According to PTRG Director Frances Thomson, this was done in the interests of ramping up the opportunities for public programming, and to stage an event that balances the audience's need for popular engagement with the accommodation of focused contemporary practice.

Curator Amber Church believes the broad mix of concepts and genres is likely to stimulate questions and challenge preconceptions of what

constitutes public art. The artworks, by 14 north Queensland-based artists and eight from other parts of Australia, include sound work, performance, projection, interactive and installation pieces, some of which break new ground for *Strand Ephemera*.

Sydney performance and sound artists Vic McEwan and Sarah Moor have recorded local historians talking about The Strand for their audio work *Listen. Now Walk*. It can be downloaded by *Strand Ephemera* visitors from www.cadfactory.com.au as an MP3 file, and listened to on an MP3 player as they stroll along The Strand; ready loaded MP3 players will also be available for hire from the *Strand Ephemera* information desk on the Burke Street headland.

Tony Cuthbertson, from Magnetic Island, also references local history with *Bottiger's Hut*, a three-quarter replica of the home of a Magnetic Island pioneer, Otto Bottiger, on Nelly Bay beach. The original hut often appeared to be 'floating' in Nelly Bay at high tide as a result of erosion of the sand dune. Although Cuthbertson floated the replica hut in Nelly Bay Harbour in 2008, for *Strand Ephemera* it is placed under coconut palms along The Strand beach, similarly to how it appeared on Nelly Bay beach.

Ingham-based artist Pam Lane places water-based objects on the land in *Drift Bottle No. 0852*. Drift bottles, as the name suggests, are normally used to collect scientific data relating to sea currents, but Lane will bury them along the beach, to be randomly found by *Ephemera*-goers, who can fill the attached tags with data and take them to the information desk to have the details recorded.

Tropical Snow by Kalven Lloyd is even more playful. Although the audience is likely to read all kinds of subtexts about climate change



Vic McEwan and Sarah Moor, *Listen. Now walk*, 2009, Sounds on the strand,
Courtesy of Perc Tucker Regional Gallery

or human attempts to control the natural world, Lloyd simply wants a reaction to the incongruity of seeing a section of The Strand under a sprinkling of snow.

Jan Hynes, from Townsville like Lloyd, also wants to strike an upbeat chord with *Pink Piano*, an interactive work combining a piano in situ, music, art and nature; requests are welcome.

Each evening in The Strand amphitheatre, Tegan Ollett, also from Townsville, will present *B'INDING*, a performance and video work exploring movement and constriction, manipulation and the binding effect of negativity. It is the first daily performance work to be included in *Strand Ephemera*, and Ollett's first major foray from conventional dance work into performance art.

Other works address ecological issues, class structures, ways of seeing and ideas of infinity. Alan Valentine's fleet of *Fishing Trawlers* and Denise Vanderlugt's *The Rainbow Jellyfish* both use recycled materials (wood and plastic shopping bags, respectively) but with completely different effects.

Some of the *Strand Ephemera* artists, along with other local artists, will conduct more than 20 free, walk-in, on-site workshops as part of the extended public program, designed to make *Strand Ephemera* more hands-on. Visitors of all ages will be able to try wire, clay, sand sculpting, movement and more, says Church.

The *Strand Ephemera* Education program (SEE), under new sponsorship by Ferry Property, features daily class workshops and tours. Resource kits for teachers, activity booklets for primary students and activity sheets for secondary students have been developed with input from teachers to link the educational materials back into the school curriculum.

There are several opportunities for the public to talk with the artists. On Saturday, 5 September from 10 am to 12 pm, each artist will be available at the site of their work. Jill Chism, one of the participating artists from Port Douglas, will speak on her *Water's Edge* project, which looks at issues surrounding water use and human interaction and intervention along the coastline, at Perc Tucker's Access After 5 program on Tuesday, 8 September. Various *Strand Ephemera* artists will also give talks on their practice at the gallery on Sunday, 13 September.

Established favourites – the People's Choice Award, the *Strand Ephemera* open photography competition and daily twilight tours – round out the stepped-up public program; while the Public Art Forum should give rise to some interesting discussion. Speaking along with Andrea Kleist will be Christine Ballinger, the Artistic Director for Noosa Regional Gallery's *Floating Land*, an exhibition of ephemeral/temporal site-specific work, and Eliza Tee, Senior Program Officer, Public Art Queensland Government. With diverse art and full public programming combining to fulfil a shared vision, it would seem *Strand Ephemera 5* will qualify as *gesamtkunstwerk*.

For a program and more information, visit www.townsville.qld.gov.au/recreation/gallery/perctucker/strand_ephemera/index.



STRAND EPHEMERA 5

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Geoff Harvey, *Pierre the French Bulldog*

Twelve Degrees of Latitude : Regional Gallery and University Art Collections in Queensland

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Floor Talk: Lead Curator Bettina MacAulay and Co-Curator Brett Adlington
When: Saturday 12 September at 11.00 am
Where: Perc Tucker Regional Gallery
Cost: Free

George Gittoes, *The Night Brief, Baidou*, 1995, oil on canvas, 168 x 200 cm. City of Townsville Art Collection



Talking Tapa Pasifika Bark Cloth in Queensland

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Images (L-R): *Suluni Vakamau Traditional female wedding attire/set*, Three-piece set made by Nainasa Kacimaiwai Nayau village, Lau Province, acquired from the makers at the Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival, Fiji, 2006. Mannequin dressed by Jiowana Dau Miles. On loan from the collection of Dr Susan Cochrane; *Turtle design solofua* (detail), paper mulberry bast, candlenut soot, 388 x 87cm (rolled to 160 x 87cm). On loan from the collection of University of Queensland Anthropology Museum



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